

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

When considering the present business environment, it is evident that the environment has become more dynamic and competitive. The competition is more time and cost based and as a result the business cycles have become shorter. These business and organization level changes have created immense pressure on IT systems and organizations expect the IT systems to be able to cater the rapid changes happening at the business level. But unfortunately many organizations' people and processes are not geared to face the dynamic environment. Therefore the delivery of IT products has become a challenging task for the IT work force. Managing time, cost and scope while delivering the required quality is the major focus in project management but most of the time it is found that by the time the end product reaches the customers, either the product is not what the customer expected or the business requirement has changed. It is often questioned the effectiveness and the efficiency of traditional methods of IT project management and how much visibility the customers have on the progress of the project. It is everyone's dream that software development has to cost less and produce better results—more reliably, with better customer service, and more transparency.

Agile Project Management (APM) was introduced to face these challenges and support the ever changing business environment. Agility simply means the ability to both create and respond to change in order to profit in a turbulent business environment. Agile methodologies such as eXtreme Programming (XP), SCRUM and Feature-Driven Development strive to reduce the cost of change throughout the software development process.

1.2 Motivation

As a Project Manager who has worked in a dynamic environment I personally believe that Agile could have helped to serve our customers better and as a department we would be geared to face the speed the business and the organization is changing. Ultimately if we cannot exceed the expectations of our customers, it's a failure of the entire organization and this motivated me to research in this area. It would help many organizations to understand the practical difficulties in adopting Agile Management and can take preventive and corrective actions to successfully implement Agile Project Management.

Another reason which motivated me to analyze the awareness levels of Agile Project Management is the awareness level shown by the MBA IT students at the Project Management course module. MBA IT students represent an important sample in the IT workforce and are with high expertise. The lower awareness levels shown among them regarding APM as well as the low awareness levels witnessed at my previous workplace, which is a leading Company in Sri Lanka, motivated me to look at the awareness levels of APM and the factors which affect the awareness.

1.3 Problem Statement

Despite of the advantages of APM not many IT Professionals are aware of APM in the Sri Lanka.

Through the problem statement the main question to address is “What are the awareness levels of agile project management among the IT professionals in Sri Lanka?”

1.4 Research Objectives

The research objectives for this study were derived as follows with the intention of focusing awareness part of the study specifically on IT project managers in Sri Lanka.

- To find out the awareness levels of agile project management among the Sri Lankan IT project managers.
- Ascertain what affects the awareness levels of agile project management among the Sri Lankan IT project managers.
- To find out the conflicts and challenges faced when implementing agile methodology.
- Provide recommendations for implementing APM based on successful implementations.

1.5 Significance of the Study

APM is an emerging methodology in Sri Lanka with only few numbers of companies practicing it at present. APM has the potential to help manage certain IT projects successfully. The study reveals the level of awareness of the Agile Project Management methodologies among IT Project Managers in Sri Lanka. It also identifies the factors affecting the awareness of Agile Methodologies among IT project managers in Sri Lanka. The study also reveals the conflicts and challenges faced when practicing APM, which will be useful for organizations to understand the required changes within the organization in order to successfully implement Agile Methodologies.

1.6 Research Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to carry out the research. Quantitative research was carried out by selecting a sample of IT project managers. Having a qualitative method helped to reveal variables apart from the most obvious ones and in fulfilling objectives of finding the APM implementation challenges and providing recommendations.

Questionnaires, Interviews and case studies were used to gather the required information. The questionnaire was prepared to cover all identified parameters during the first phase of the study. Appropriate scaling was used where ever necessary in order to make comparisons possible. Interviews were based on standard questions and the results were summarized.

1.7 Research Findings

According to the results obtained, it can be concluded that IT projects managers in Sri Lanka do not have a satisfactory level of awareness on APM.

The results from the statistical analysis confirms that the nature of business requirements and customer influence have a significant effect on APM awareness among the IT project managers in Sri Lanka. This fact was strongly emphasized in the interviews carried out.

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 2 of the thesis covers the literature review done for the study. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology with the conceptual framework and the hypotheses formed to achieve the research objectives. Data analysis is discussed in chapter 4. Chapter 5 discusses the results of the study. Conclusions and recommendations are presented in chapter 6.



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